

PR
3991
A6044

A
A
0
0
0
3
7
8
5
3
7
5

LEGENDS

OF

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY

OF

PLASTERERS.



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

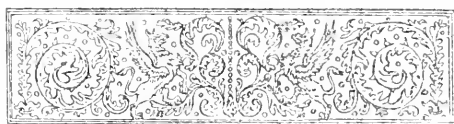
LEGENDS

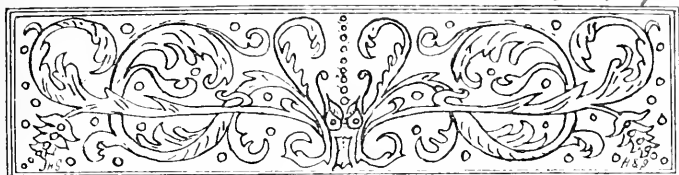
OF

The Worshipful Company

OF

PLAISTERERS.





Legends of the Plaisterers' Company.

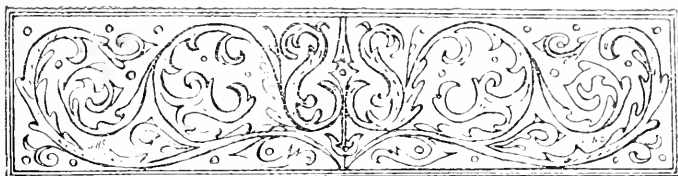


On Master's Day 1879, I presumed to present to my Brethren and Sisters of the Worshipful Company of Plaisterers, a few out of the many oral traditions of the Guild, narrated in response to the toasts of "The Ladies" at the Master's Banquet. The kind reception then accorded to my little book emboldened me to continue the Legends, but to-day I have told the last that I know. I therefore venture to hope that this volume, containing the whole series, will be accepted as an affectionate farewell offering from

AN OLD PAST MASTER.

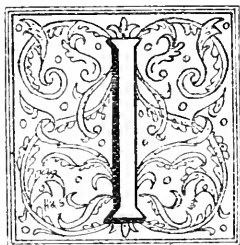
MASTER'S DAY, 1886.





Richmond, 1872.

THE ORIGIN OF OUR GUILD.



N ceaseless course the sun
rolls on,
The hours flit fast away ;
Till once a year he shines upon
Our Master's Banquet Day.

When at our festive board, fair dames
Bid witty converse flow ;
Whilst at our feet, the ancient Thames
Runs murmuring down below.

Runs murmuring, as in days of yore,
Down past our sires it ran :
In this same neighbourhood, before
It knew primæval man.

Yes, before man. The Mercers love
Their Guild is first, to say.
It is not so, for I can prove
We older are than they

Ere Briton, Celt, or Saxon strong,
In England had been seen ;
The Plaisterers' Company would throng
Thames' bank and verges green.

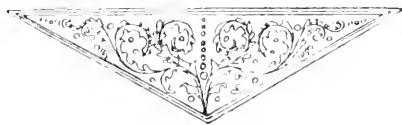
In useful toil their day is sped,
Their eve in pleasant sport ;
When it grows dark, they go to bed,
As decent Plaisterers ought.

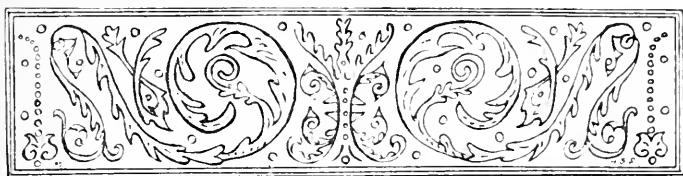
With sharp strong teeth tall trees they fell,
Lay them along in ranks ;
And by their industry compel
The Thames to keep its banks.

Meanwhile, their wives mud-pies prepare ;
Which, in default of pails,
They to their mates as plaster bear,
On panniers, then called tails.

Thus, gentlemen, as you no doubt
In Darwin are believers,
I think it fairly is made out,
Our Guild was formed by Beavers.

And Beavers are we still to-night,
Mated to Beaveresses,
Who, like their foremothers, delight
In broad-tailed silken dresses.





Richmond, 1874.

THE BIRTH OF OUR ART.

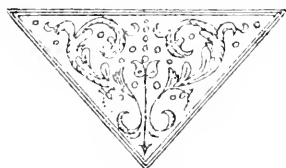


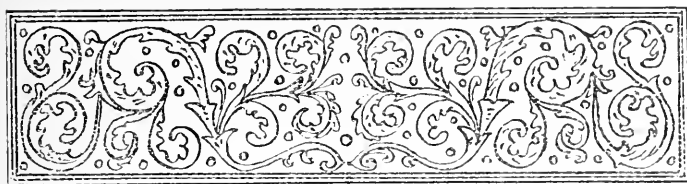
F prehistoric times there is a tale,
How that a little girl and boy at play
With mud, and water, and a tiny pail,
Were making a dirt pudding out of clay.
When suddenly the boy conceived a
thought,

His small companion for his model stood,
And from the shapeless pudding deftly wrought
Grew Venus, peerless in her womanhood.
Wonderful children, for from them descends
The Plaisterer's Art ; the power to express
Soul out of clay, and mould the grace that lends
To dreams poetic, forms of loveliness.
Though Milo's beauty has a broken arm,
Who without worshipping can pass her by ?
What eye that sees, is senseless to the charm
Of her whom men have named De Medici ?
Canova's goddess, smiles a Queen confessed.
Thorwaldsen's Venus rose from out the wave.
With Dorothea, one for life could rest ;
Or share the fetter of the Grecian Slave.



These beauteous creatures were by Plaisterers made ;
Are Plaisterers' daughters, therefore are our own :
And we may love them all, nor feel afraid
To waste our love on images of stone.
For have we not their sisters by our sides,
Their models, to whose healths we have been drinking ?
Yet, brethren, just one caution—Ill betides
The youth, who tries clay pudding without thinking ?





Richmond, 1875.

THE REFORMATION.



EDITH, the Plaisterer's daughter, married
Hugh,
The Armourer's son ; and gossips met
and said
It would end badly, and the girl would
rue

The day she wedded such a roystering blade.

Edith was fair, blue eyed, a golden ray
Played in her hair, her sweet lips when they spoke
Dropped notes of silver ; as she went her way,
Her fairy footsteps scarce the silence broke.
Hugh was a burly youngster, handsome, strong,
Full of mad life, good tempered, yet uncivil,
Truthful in word, in deed too often wrong :
One whom old men thought going to the devil.

But they were married, and alas ! it seemed
That true those evil prophecies must come.
For though he loved his wife, Hugh never dreamed
His leisure time ought to be spent at home.
Bravely he worked all day, but with the eve,
The forge once shut, he sought the alehouse gate :
The first to come, always the last to leave ;
And when he left, he never went home straight.



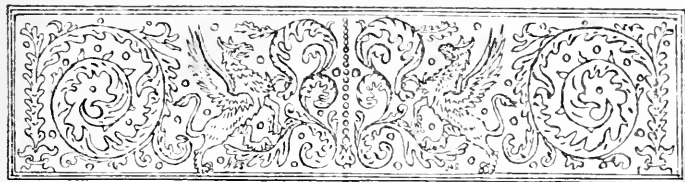
Yet Edith murmured not, did not upbraid,
But always greeted Hugh with loving tone ;
And had she not grown thin, one would have said
She rather liked thus being left alone.

Climbing one night up to a window-sill,
After a minx, who bade him come and fetch her,
Hugh fell, and broke his right leg in the spill ;
And then was carried home upon a stretcher.
No angry speech met him on Edith's part ;
She never asked the cause of his disaster :
But plying skilfully her father's art,
She neatly cased Hugh's broken leg in plaster.

Helpless in bed for many a week he lay ;
And let us hope learned patience through his pain.
For when she took the plaster band away,
He found his knee would never bend again !
But from that day, a spotless name he bore ;
Poets might sing about his blameless life.
The alehouse bench was his resort no more,
When he went out, he leaned upon his wife.

So in due time they had a baby son,
And gossips noised abroad a prodigy ;
For though his parents showed the limb to none,
A plaster cast adorned his little knee !





Richmond, 1877.




THE FINDING OF OUR ARMS.




WHEN Edward the Confessor ruled this land
By equal laws, ere Norman William's band,
With curfew bell and savage forest code,
The liberties of England overrode,
Hard by the banks of Thames, near
Richmond wood,

The cottage home of Saxon Aelfred stood,
Aelfred the Plaisterer, who with his wife,
Emma the Dairywoman, spent their life
In honest independence, rich though poor ;
Earning their daily bread, nor wanting more.

Aelfred was skilled small figures to contrive
Of Saints, so good they almost seemed alive,
Women and men ; whilst Emma, it would seem,
All up the river had a name for cream.
By Aelfred's cottage, every passing boat,
Laden with Dames and Thanes, that chanced to float
Would stop, to buy a Saint for duty first,
And then, a bowl of milk to quench their thirst :
And oft through Aelfred's mind this puzzle ran,
Why for her Saint each Lady chose a man ;
Whilst with a Thane, the choice was most uncommon
Which did not make him owner of a woman.




But pallid Hella, of grim Death the mate,
For man is ever weaving evil fate.
And so to Aelfred, out of Richmond wood,
There came a Wivern, one of Hella's brood.
Wiverns, or dragons, though they lived of yore
Like wolves in England, here exist no more :
But in their stead, the loan contractor's power
Or base promoter's art control the hour.



Emma had noticed that her dairy store
Grew daily less, instead of growing more ;
And though when milking, with her cows content,
For brimming pailfuls, still her cream all went.
Of course you guess it was the Wivern hairy,
Who having found out, poached on Emma's dairy,
Where Aelfred caught him revelling in a sup ;
Aelfred caught him, but he ate Aelfred up.

Though widowed, Emma's wit did not forsake her,
You see she did not want an undertaker.
Upon her slender purse there was no call
For scarves, or bands, black gloves, or velvet pall.
The Wivern to dispose of, was the task
Herself at present she need only ask.
Aelfred she loved, but it was premature
To seek to share his place of sepulture.

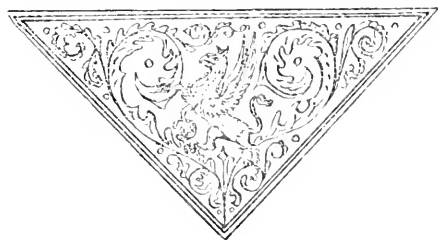


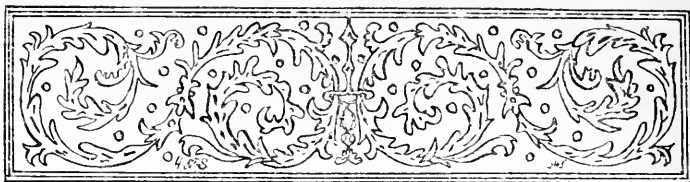
The Wivern was a plodding sort of beast,
With stated hours for sleep, and times to feast :
And Emma found, that on her milky stock
He always came to sup at nine o'clock.
One night, she took the goods of her poor man,
And water jug in hand filled every pan—
Just when the Wivern, fearing no disaster,
Looked in to have his meal—with liquid plaister

He came, he fell to supper, in a trice
Gobbled all up, it was so very nice :
And having finished, turned him home to get—
But could not move—it had begun to set.
To rear on his hind legs scant was his breath,
Ere the good plaister stiffened him in death ;
And Emma came to gaze, with eyes triumphant,
Upon her model of a Wivern rampant.

Not knowing where exactly to bestow him,
Emma next thought that it might pay to show him
Beside her husband's brushes ; a petition
To all who visited her exhibition.
So thought, so done, the widow's cleverness
Proved a short path to very great success.
The tale got wind, and people came in swarms,
To look at Emma's curious Plaisterer's Arms.

Emma is dead ; The Wivern dust must be ;
Yet still those Arms trade mark our Company :
And all their blazon, saving this, is true :
There was one Wivern, but our shield shows two.





Richmond, 1879.

THE NOBLE IMAGE.






WHEN the fifth Henry from his wars
returned,
Victorious over France, all England
woke
In a hot blaze of triumph, throbbed and
burned,

Like lava from a mountain crest, and broke
In crowds from town and village, day by day,
To hail her Hero Monarch on his way.

And London, noblest city in the land,
In council met, that nothing might be spared
Of all her costliest, and gave command
For gorgeous pageantry to be prepared ;
With song, and wine, and imaged allegory,
To welcome home the Lord of so much glory.

To set forth all the show there is no time,
Nor would you listen, were it my intent.
With one device alone this halting rhyme,
For which I crave excuse, must be content :
An arch, whence choirs of angels were to sing,
At foot of London Bridge, to greet the King.





At the two corners, winged Victories,
With trumpets, in the finest plaster cast,
Were to be placed ; while, almost in the skies,
On top as eerie as a frigate's mast,
An Image meant for London, was to stand,
With mural crown on head, and wreath in hand.

The order for these figures three was given
To Walter Dull, a master of our craft.
But Dull had not the genius spark from heaven
For such a task, which almost drove him daft.
So having tried in vain, in angry mood
He bade his 'prentice do the best he could.

Alan the 'prentice, soon the Victories wrought,
For they were more or less conventional.
But London to imagine, wanted thought ;
A woman, lovely, queenlike above all :
But when did Fancy fail the man who sought her ?
So Fancy whispered—Model master's daughter !

Alan loved Annie, like a distant star ;
That she loved him, one must not quite confess,
But only hint ; still having got so far,
London between them proved a great success.
Complete, with crown of gold, in rich array,
Her Image waited for the holiday.

The morning broke, his workshop Alan sought
At dawn, in haste his work of art to place.
When oh ! what wreck one fatal night had brought !
The cats and mice had played at Chevy Chase ;
And Chevy Chase had Alan's prospects undone,
Worse than a panic. It had broken London.

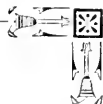
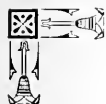


Cloudless the sky to-day,
Gallant the show,
Splendid in long array
Onward they go.
Every Trade Company
Marshallled in order,
Blazing with heraldry,
Crossing the border.
Under the arch of green
Countless they pour,
Sure was such welcoming
Never before.

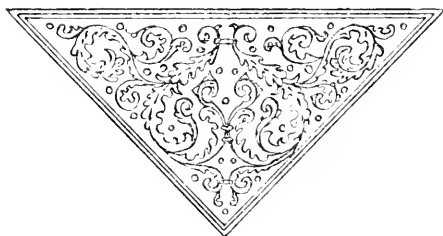
The pageant passes, till at last the King
Before the floral arch reins in his steed,
To listen, whilst the white-robed angels sing
Their hymn, with aid of harp and tuneful reed.
He notes the Victories two, and presently
His glances mount to London up on high.

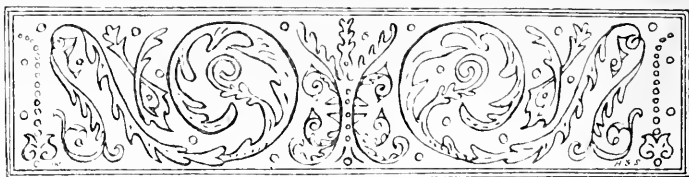
Is it an Image, or a lady fair ?
Can thought conceive, can art such charms contrive ?
With those white arms what sculpture may compare ?
Can aught hold footing on that height alive ?
Deeper each moment grows the mystery,
So still the figure stands against the sky.

The King moves on ; the angel song is ending.
See ! from her dainty hand comes shimmering down
The wreath, which, on his glorious head descending,
Circles his helmet with a laurel crown :
And a great shout rolls up like thunderstrife,
To the brave Image, that is so like life.



You know it was no Image, and you know
Annie herself, enrobed as London, stood !
Here, will no sceptic call on me to show
Of this old legend true the likelihood :
For Plaisterers' wives and daughters ever prove
They can dare all, if need there be, for love !





Greenwich, 1880.

THE LAST CHARGE.






HERE is a hamlet in the pleasant vale,
Midst Kentish hills, that borders on
the Cray,
Where in the spring, still weeps the
nightingale,
Primroses smile, and dainty wind
flowers play.

Where orchard blossoms fill the air with scent,
Which zephyr stolen, floats upon the breeze,
To perfume many an antique tenement,
Of Peer, or Squire, nestling in the trees.

Here an old Plaisterer came to end his days ;
Whose skill was great, whose fortune was but small.
One who had learned by wisdom of God's ways,
To be content, whatever might befall.

Long ere my story had he lost his wife,
But had one daughter, Mary, and one thought,
Which was the very essence of his life,
To teach her all his art that could be taught.




That could be taught ; for soon the maiden's skill,
Her delicate hand inspired by Nature's power,
Her beauteous neighbour, could create at will,
All that was fair in living form, or flower.

Alas, for Art ! that she can never prove
The only idol of our youthful days.
But always has to yield her shrine to Love,
The cruel God, who when most smiling, slays.

There came a trumpeter, a soldier bold,
Son of the gamekeeper, on furlough home ;
And now the old, old story must be told.
Oh, why to Mary did that soldier come !

For soon, too soon, the happy days were past,
The dawn of love, when they were all in all
To one another ; days too bright to last ;
And he must leave her at his duty's call.



Then he was gone, and then she seemed to yield
Herself a slave to Art ; but what she did
In those long hours of study, she concealed ;
What was her work from every eye was hid.

Month followed month, paler, and paler still,
Grew Mary's cheek, her brow with care oppressed ;
As one foreboding some approaching ill,
Like seer of old, or prophetess possess.

At last, one morn, with sudden sounds that fill
The air with war notes, circling wide, at large,
Forth issuing from her room, rings sharp, and shrill,
A soldier's trumpet, rallying to the charge.

They burst the door ; they view with bated breath
A falling trumpeter, a falling steed,
Struck by one shot ; both modelled to the death,
So deadly true, one almost sees them bleed.

Clasping the feet, the stricken maiden lies ;
The great work finished she has wrought alone,
Her life spell broken ; deeply once she sighs,
And then her loving soul to heaven has flown.

Change we the scene to Afghan wilds afar.
It is a battle that we look upon,
Where in the reckless chivalry of war,
Men heed not life, so glory be but won.

See where our horsemen charge, and charge again,
The swarming hordes onsurging like a wave,
Fast though they fall, determined not in vain
Is their's the task, our English guns to save.

Yet but once more, and ours the victory ;
The trumpeter rings out the charges sound,
His last, for while it echoes, destiny
In one red death hurls man and horse to ground.

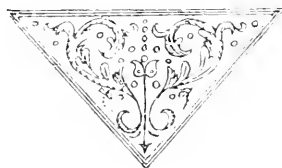
She slumbers in her quiet village grave,
Amidst the flowers, and birds, she loved so well.
She rests in peace, but round-eyed children have
About the grave a legend strange to tell.

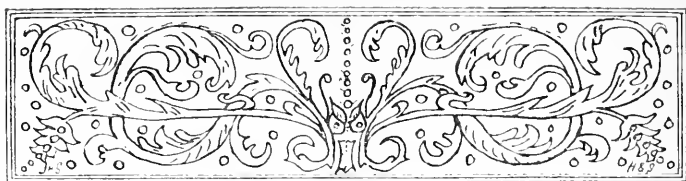
They say that sometimes when the rising sun
Topping the steeple, a first ray has thrown
Down on her head-stone, drinking one by one
The dewdrops up, which night has o'er it strown.

All of a sudden, there come sounds that fill
The air with war notes, circling wide, at large,
Around God's acre, ringing sharp, and shrill,
Like soldier's trumpet, rallying to the charge.

The soldier sleeps beneath a cairn of stones ;
No perfumed zephyr floats that gorge along,
That barren soil no flower of beauty owns,
No bird there charms the evening with her song.

But travellers tell, that to that cairn, when gloams
The darkening night, which there falls suddenly,
Once, and once only in each year, there comes
The speechless sorrow of a woman's sigh.





Richmond, 1881.




THE NUN.



WHILE England's faith was still the creed
of Rome,
Southward o'er London Bridge once
stood the home
Of Bernard, who a Plaisterer by trade,
Did mason's work his slender means to
aid.


This Bernard had two daughters—Margaret,
Dark browed, lithe limbed, spare bodied, a brunette ;
And Alice, rosy mouthed, with angel's hair,
Fair, as our English girls alone are fair.

Devout was Alice, one who day by day,
To matins, mass, and vespers found her way.
But Margaret, boy-like, used her hands to soil,
Her father's mate, in all her father's toil.
There came a day when Bernard had to die ;
His worldly goods cut up but scantily ;
So on themselves his daughters must depend,
In this hard world, wherein they had no friend.




A few salt tears, for some small vanities,
Which womanlike she could not quite despise ;
And Alice dreamed her earthly care was done,
She took the veil, and made a lovely Nun.
Margaret made choice her father's craft to ply,
And carried on his trade successfully.
Though by the code Society still preaches,
She had to make herself a pair of breeches.

From Shooters Hill, you can see Lamorbic,
Though now, no traces of its Nunnery.
Whilst on the left, concealed by Bostal Wood,
Some walls remain, where Lessness Abbey stood.



Now Alice was a Nun at Lamorbic,
When Wilfred, a young Monk, she chanced to see ;
Who with Thames salmon, as a compliment
From Lessness, against Friday, had been sent.
Wilfred saw her, and they two fell in love.
That so they sinned, it would be sin to prove ;
Although they broke their vows one summer's day,
And quitting cell, and convent, ran away.

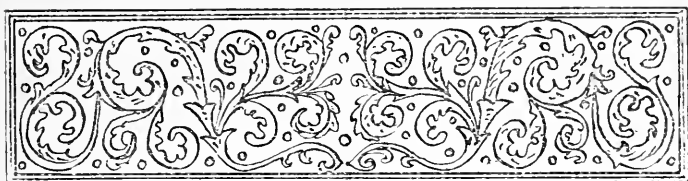


Alas, for love ! so oft unfortunate,
To be pursued and captured, was their fate.
Then on them fell the Church's awful doom,
To be built up within a living tomb.
As Constance died, must hapless Alice die ;
That piteous scene, the Wizard's minstrelsy
In Marmion paints, and makes the theme to me
One which to try, profanity would be.

Imagine then the crypt at Lamorbic,
The elder Nuns, their chill asperity,
A group of ghosts—the younger Sisters, pale,
As Alice had done lest they too should fail.
A dark young mason, quickly works and well,
Plaister and stone the dismal barrier swell,
Till its last block the parting glance has riven,
Which those sad eyes send up from earth to heaven.

Through Lamorbic when morning scarce has broken,
From cell to cell, words of wild news are spoken,
Strange truth, which wondering eyes flock down to see,
The tomb burst open, and the Nun set free.
The dark browed Plaisterer was Margaret,
She used a mortar never meant to set ;
Crept back at night, undid what she had done,
And with her sister had for ever flown.





Richmond, 1882.

PLAISTERS' HALL.



THE man who wanders now through
London streets,
Mile upon mile, a journey without end ;
But seldom notes the face of one he
meets,
And starts at recognition of a friend.
Nor often thinks, that there was once a day
When London was a habitable place
For citizens content at home to stay ;
Nor in, and out, by railway train to race.

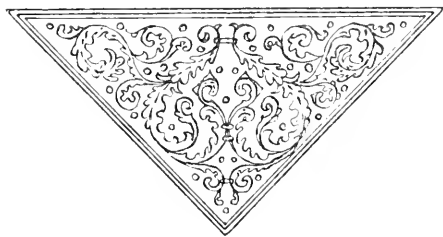
Yet there was such a day, and in the reign
Of the Eighth Henry o'er this land of ours,
London could show in many a shady lane,
Sweet homes, embowered in gardens full of flowers.
In such a home, down Addle Street half way,
Lived William Elder, Plaisterer by trade,
A bachelor, though aged now and gray ;
Of wedlock having always been afraid.

And so it happed, one silent summer's eve,
Whilst watching from his garden falling night ;
The old man mused, how it were best to leave
The pleasant home, so long his heart's delight.
E'en as he mused, sweet odours and uncommon
Pervaded all around, and in a flame
Of softest light, appeared a lovely woman ;
Though footstep none betrayed the way she came ;
And in a voice all music, thus she said :
Friend William Elder, worthy man, though old,
My trusty Plaisterer, your will to aid
The Virgin, Saint of Pargiters, behold.

To Master, Wardens, and Assistant Court,
Of Plaisterers—you shall this place convey,
To hold in perpetuity, and nought
On earth shall have the power to say them nay.
But seeing Art is weak, and Trade is strong,
And valiant Snips are men of might to fear ;
To Merchant Tailors, as a shield from wrong,
Shall be disbursed eight pennies every year.

The Fire of London must this house destroy,
But it shall rise again, and there shall be
A time when it the honour shall enjoy
Of hiding every female mystery.
For in its rooms, through Foster Porter's care,
All things for woman needful shall be stored ;
From crinolettes, which London beauties wear,
To cotton stripes, for dusky belles abroad.
And woe to him who tries to void your will ;
Too long a tongue, shall be that statesman's bane,
Treason, and War, shall him pursue, until,
From Plaisterers' goods he doth his hand restrain.

Thus having spoke, she vanished. For a while
Remained a golden cloudlet in the air ;
And Elder for a moment, could beguile
His dazzled sense, by tracing letters there ;
A central monogram of burning rays,
Made up of *IV*, and *E*, and *G*,
Encircled by this legend, all ablaze,
Forbear rash man, " Maria monet te,"
Which means, " St. Mary warns thee," surely it
Requires few words that warning to explain,
While City Companies' Commissions sit
In bootless quest, and labour all in vain.
While vacillation fraught with ills unknown
Broods o'er our Council. foiling every plan.
Until the Plaisterers are left alone
By him whom people call " The Grand Old Man."





Greenwich, 1883.

PETTY TREASON.

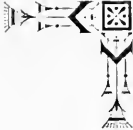



SORRY am I that in order of time,
Out of the Legends so carefully stored
By the late Mr. Brewer, it falls to my
rhyme
The deed of a Plaisterer's wife to
record.

Whose history is but a subject for mourning,
Inasmuch as her conduct was terribly sad ;
Still the truth must be told, so that all may take warning,
When even a Plaisteress went to the bad.

In the lane hard by Newgate, which takes its cognomen
From the fact, that the culprit for Tyburn encarted
There was freed from his fetters, dispiriting omen,
That the chain of this life would for him soon be parted ;
Stood the Plaisterers' Arms, where our freemen when looking
About for a job, were accustomed to go,
And drink beer in the bar, far too frequently booking
A long score to settle, with nothing to show.

Within a stone's throw, lived a couple long married,
A Plaisterer he, she possessed of a mangle,
He coarse and foul spoken, while jealousy harried
The poor woman's mind, leading oft to a wrangle ;


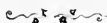



And I am not quite sure but that conjugal treason
She had not some cause for suspicion about,
For her John had a habit of giving as reason
When late to come in, he with Sal had been out.

One night at the Plaisterers' Arms he kept staying,
He said seeking work, and drank gallons of beer ;
Till the time came to close, when he went off, displaying
His temper in oaths that were fearful to hear.
His wife was up waiting, without any candle
, (That long had burned out) till her brute should come home.
When he bounced through the door, seized her winch by the
handle,
Hit her hard on the head, and reeled out of the room.
She was used to be sworn at, but this new proceeding,
Astonished her first, then with rage set her weeping,
As she crept to their bedroom, her poor head all bleeding,
To find him already, a-snoring, a-sleeping.



Dark thoughts clouded the woman's brain ;
Never would she be struck again
By that snoring sot. From his drunken bout
Would he might never alive come out.
The parson forbodes of this frame of mind
To yield to temptation when half inclined,
The Devil an instrument finds for our needs,
And wicked thoughts grow into wicked deeds.

Plaister of Paris is standing by,
Water for mixing is also nigh.
It is done—and he scarce draws another breath
Ere his ears, and his nostrils, are full of death.
No, not quite yet ; for his mouth gapes wide,
So a big dab of plaister she pops inside.




He splutters but once as he swallows the ball,
And the last groan he utters, it sounds like Sal.
Twelve Jurymen and the Coroner sit
On the body, and find John died in a fit.
She keeps her council, and presently
In Saint Andrew's Churchyard he lies, close by.

All our actors were dead and gone,
Long, long ago; and the victim laid
For a hundred years in his grave alone,
And no hint of foul practice was ever made.
But the Holborn Improvement Act was passed,
And Saint Andrew's Churchyard was pulled about,
And skeleton John was exhumed at last,
Proving that murder must sometime out.
For there it was, apparent to all,
Two plaister plugs where the ears had been,
Two up the nose, and a larger ball
The jaws of the skull and its base between.



A doctor if poisoned in order to try,
The ball took away, and examined it well,
And discovered beneath it, spasmodically,
Three letters impressed—S, and A, and L.
And he hatched a machine from his fertile brain,
Into the which if you speak a word,
By turning a handle you hear it again,
Of your voice in a mimicry most absurd.
So that crime has a purpose must all agree,
And that good comes from evil my tale has shown;
Since the Plaisterer's wife, though as bad as could be,
Was the primary cause of the Phonophone.





Greenwich, 1884.

THE ROSE MAIDEN.



ABBOT of Westminster, noble and good,
Pity a woman's widowhood.
For the shield of the Church, in Sanctuary,
From the arrows of treason to thee we fly.
For Gloster and Hastings, a traitor pair,
Have laid violent hands upon England's
heir ;

And a prisoner close in the Tower lies he,
Who at Westminster crown'd King should be.

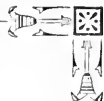
Thus spake a lady in sore distress,
A lady, whose passing loveliness
Had Edward the Fourth by its charm subdued,
And a Benedict made of that bachelor rude.
But the day of her triumph had come and gone ;
Edward was dead, and she was alone,
With the perilous charge of her royal brood,
And Richard the hunchback thirsting for blood.

Weeping, forgetful of high estate,
She sat on the floor disconsolate.
While her long fair hair, which had come unbound
From beneath her hood, trailed down to the ground,
And encircled her form with its silken sheen,
Like a glory of gold through a fountain seen.

Horace has sung of a daughter's face
In beauty excelling a mother's grace ;
And so was it now, in spite of her hair,
Elizabeth's daughter was still more fair,
The White Rose of York, all England's pride,
As she suppliant knelt by her mother's side.
Where was the Abbot whose mouth could say—No,
To such beautiful lips, in such terrible woe.
Though a very good monk, I am bound to confess,
He had really a pleasure in answering—Yes.

Long did they rest beneath the Abbot's care,
Secure from turmoil, raging everywhere
Beyond the precincts, but forbid to come
Within the limits of their Sacred home ;
And shortly every day arrived to wait
For the first opening of the Abbey gate,
A little maid who sweet white roses brought,
And all she had to sell, the Princess bought.

At length one day, from out the fragrant heap,
The girl chose one, and giving a sly peep
Through conscious eyes up to the Princess, said :
Lady, I give you this rose, it is red.
Red was the rose, but rosier the red
That o'er the face of England's daughter spread,
As she replied—My cause your gift denies,
The red rose and the white are enemies.
Lady, not so, answered the girl, and smiled,
Hear but my tale, and you will be beguiled
Into accepting my poor flower, and see
Roses of strife no more shall emblems be.
My father is a Plaisterer, and he
Is copying patterns out in Brittany ;



Where frieze, and capital, and cornice, show
More wealth of taste than we in England know ;
And as the chalk his skilful fingers ply,
Oft is he spoken to by passers by.
There came a Prince of noble bearing, who
When from his speech an Englishman he knew,
Asked him—What news from home ? And presently
Heard all about your buying flowers of me.
Go friend, said he, and write your child that I,
The Duke of Richmond, bid her quietly
Give the White Rose of York, a lover red,
Say it means peace, and that our feud is dead.

Like marble statue, stood Elizabeth
For a few moments, scarcely drawing breath.
Then spake as in a dream—Poor England's woes
To heal be mine. Maiden, I take his rose.

Yet crime still follows crime ; the unhappy land
Lies crushed beneath usurping Richard's hand.
Whose venomous tusk, imbued with nephew's blood,
Has torn all friendship, rent all brotherhood.
But England is no home for tyranny,
Statesman or King, whoe'er the tyrant be,
E'en while his creatures adulation pay,
England awakes, and sweeps the swarm away.

Proud is the show of Richard's chivalry,
Glittering in steel, a faultless cavalry.
Through Leicester streets they ride, a gorgeous sight ;
As morn beholds them, bound for Bosworth fight ;
Half in contempt, to scatter wide the crew
Of Harry Tudor and his yeomen true.

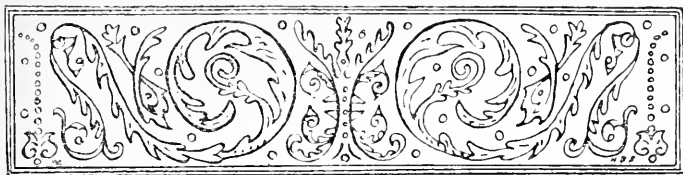


Leicester at eve, beholds them pass again,
A crowd of cowards, plying spur and rein,
Fleeing for life, and followed by the corse
Of the slain Hunchback, thrown across a horse,
Void of all reverence, inanimate ;
With bleeding head, through bumping at the gate.
While shouts of triumph over Bosworth ring
In circling echoes ; hailing Richmond—King.

No more of war. Be ours a happier strain.
Trace we our steps to Westminster again,
Where before altar high, with sumptuous rite,
Abbot and Priest in wedlock true unite,
The Red Rose King, who plucked his crown from Death,
And the White Rose of York—Elizabeth.

Peerless she stands—a Queen beyond compare,
But all her bridesmaids noble are and fair.
Had she been absent, even Cupid's eyes,
Were blind to judge betwixt them Beauty's prize.
All noble, saving one, whose bashful mien,
And modest care to hold herself unseen,
With eyes downcast, yet all amazed to see
The flashing gems, the costly brodery,
That deck the bridesmaid's dress she wears, disclose
The Plaisterer's daughter—Giver of the Rose.





Greenwich, 1885.

THE CHILD ANGEL.



WAY in rural Wiltshire, where the downs
swell all around,
And countless flocks crop daintily by
præhistoric mound
Of stones unhewn, whose builders are
dead so long ago ;
That who they were, or what those
stones, no man may truly know.

Down in the grassy hollow, by meadow, marsh, and grove,
Where winds the lazy river, that scarcely seems to move ;
There stands an old Cathedral, and overtops the town,
So that its storied windows, on every roof look down.

And many a Virgin Martyr, and many a Christian Saint,
Are sculptured there in niches, midst boss and gargoyle quaint ;
Whilst pinnacle on pinnacle in order rise around
With buttresses that fly in air, and scorn to touch the ground.

And over all, with work like lace in circling patterns shown,
Upshoots the tapering steeple, a miracle in stone.
Above its ceric summit no bird essays to fly ;
And when the storm clouds gather, they shroud it in the sky.

Once in the Close's corner a workman's cottage stood,
Whose tenant as a Plaisterer eked out a livelihood.
A lonely, quiet man was he, by fate so sore bereft,
One only child, a little girl, was all that he had left.

In the great Church when called to work, he took his
daughter too ;
And as the Legends of the Saints, their lives and deaths, he
knew ;
In teaching her each history the father took delight
Of Saints without, of tombs within, of Bishop, Dame, and
Knight.

In the Nave's western window in stained glass is told
The story of the Manger, myrrh, frankincense, and gold ;
And though she knew the Magi three the Son of God adored,
Yet most she liked to hear about the Mother of our Lord.

She loved the Virgin's face, and when her father chanced to say,
She was the Virgin's godchild, through being born in May,
The child grew fancy stricken, for nothing else she sought ;
But to stay there with the Virgin, became her only thought.

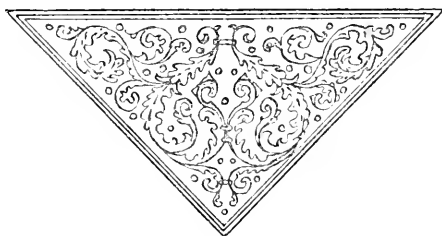
Thus it fell out from Matin time till Evensong was o'er,
The child in the Cathedral lived daily more and more ;
And when the sun was setting, she chose a kneeling place,
Where the Virgin's golden glory might shine upon her face.

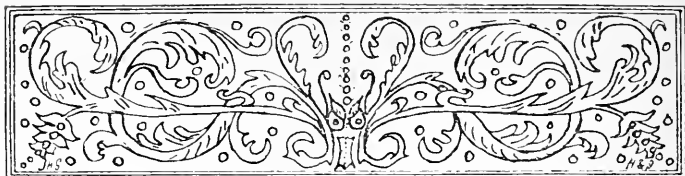
At last the Bishop heard of her, a learned man, and old ;
And so he came to talk with her, and hear her Legends told ;
And though in social station their paths lay far and wide,
As friends they used to pace the Aisles, for hours, side by side.

But godliness, nor learning, from death no life may save,
And one morn the good old Bishop was borne in to his grave ;
Weeping she saw him buried, and from that woeful day,
She like a broken flower, faded and passed away.

A tomb inlaid with marble in the Cathedral stands,
Bearing the Bishop's effigy, with Heaven up-pointed hands,
And hovering o'er his pillow, as though in prayer she smiled,
Kneels, clothed with Angel pinions, a likeness of the child.

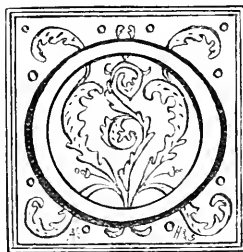
And when at eve the setting sun sinks reddening more and
more,
Then the Virgin's golden glory comes creeping up the floor,
One moment on the Bishop's tomb its fleeting hues remain,
And in their glow the Angel face warms into life again.





London, 1886.

THE HERRING FISHING.



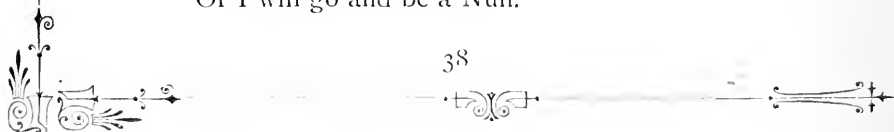
N Folkestone strand the surges beat,
The southern breeze swells
pleasantly;
To-day, the Folkestone fishing fleet
After the herrings puts to sea.

The luggers dancing are afloat,
Up to the North their course is bound.
May Fortune smile on every boat,
And keep her crew all safe and sound.

Young Harold Baker comes along,
One moment only may he stay,
To snatch a kiss, and do no wrong,
From the sweet lips of Elspeth May.

Children together, they have grown
Fair woman and brave man to be ;
And Folkestone's priest will make them one,
Soon as this voyage shall ended be.

Tears in her eyes, and yet a smile,
As thus she speaks in teasing fun :
Harold, stay not a weary while,
Or I will go and be a Nun.



The sails are set, from Folkestone bay,
Boat after boat stands out to sea ;
* Froghole grows dim, and fades away
At last, St. Eanswyth's Nunnery.

On Folkestone cliffs, an Abbess old,
St. Eanswyth rules a sisterhood
Of holy Nuns, whose hours are told,
In fast, or prayer, or doing good.




But Eanswyth once, a princess fair,
At Court was gayest of the gay ;
With neck of snow, and golden hair ;
Just such a maid as Elspeth May.

Now feeble, on her couch she lies,
Dying, in patient suffering.
Oh ! vanity of vanities,
For all the passing bell must ring.

The passing bell is tolling now,
Its solemn knell, a warning given
To wayfarers, in prayer to bow,
While Eanswyth's soul ascends to heaven.

But death, like life, hath pomp and state,
And when an Abbess Princess dies,
Her funeral must celebrate
Her rank with fitting obsequies.

* The Fisher-town.



A Plaisterer by the King is sent
A sleeping figure to prepare,
St. Eanswyth's self to represent,
When she was young, and debonair.

The Convent folk ask Elspeth May
To sit, she does not answer no.
Willing to help in any way
The worthy Nuns to grace their show.

And soon, like Elspeth fair of face,
A modelled Nun asleep is made ;
Which waiting more convenient place,
On Elspeth's bed to rest is laid.

Baffling the winds of the Northern Sea,
Fitful the tides up the Firths that flow ;
The take of the herrings goes prosperously,
But great is the toil, and the progress slow ;
And Harold grows weary and ill at ease,
Pining for home, and his darling one.
Why was his Elspeth so prone to tease ?
Why did she say, she would go for a Nun ?

But waiting, and watching, all have an end,
And the season for fishing has come to a close.
So joyfully homeward their prows they bend,
While speeding them onward a fair wind blows.
The North and South Foreland are passed once more,
And St. Eanswyth's Abbey looms grey in sight,
As first from the boats that have rowed ashore
Harold leaps out, in the bright moonlight.

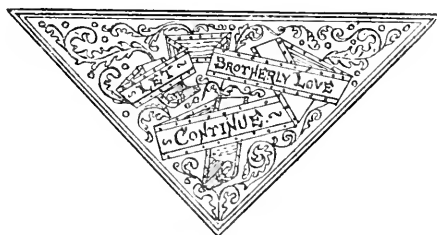
Elspeth's window is but breast high ;
Swift, to her cottage he hurries on ;
Into her room peeps modestly ;
Oh ! what a sight he looks upon.

Sleeping—an even she be not dead ;
Garbed as a Nun ; there his Elspeth lies.
Were then in earnest the words she said ;
Why is she wearing that hateful guise ?

Bitter, bitter, was Harold's cry,
What shall I do now my love is gone,
How shall I bear such misery,
Can I without her live alone ?

Angels answer that cry of pain,
Hark ! through a casement open above,
Silvery sounding, comes clear and plain,
Harold, is that your voice, my love.

Then Elspeth's self at the door behold.
His perils are over, his wife is won ;
Briefly and sweetly the tale is told,
And Elspeth, never became a Nun.



London :

Harrison & Sons, Printers in Ordinary to Her Majesty,

St. Martin's Lane.



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL



AA 000 378 537 5

